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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000991

SIPDIS

NAIROBI ALSO FOR SOMALIA UNIT

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TAGS: DJ PGOV PREL SO

SUBJECT: SOMALIA: GODJ PRESIDENT APPEALS TO YUSUF TO SUPPORT DJIBOUTI PROCESS

REF: DJIBOUTI 989

Classified By: Amb. J. Swan for reasons 1.5 (b)(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh appealed to visiting Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf to support implementation of the November 25 Communique issued by the High-Level Committee of the TFG and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). Yusuf declined, charging that the agreement was negotiated only among ethnic Hawiye representatives, and did not reflect the interests of other Somalis. GODJ contacts report that Yusuf is colluding with Transitional Parliament Speaker Madobe and offering \$3000 per vote to sway parliamentarians to block the proposed unity government. Echoing the hard-line position adopted by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), senior GODJ officials -- including the Foreign Minister -- openly describe Yusuf as an obstacle to peace. End summary.

¶2. (C) Yusuf met with Guelleh Dec. 4 for one hour and twenty minutes. According to read-outs from two people who were in attendance (GODJ Presidency Secretary General Ismail Tani and Somali Charge d'Affaires Abdurahman Hirabe), Guelleh pressed Yusuf to support the Djibouti Communique of Nov. 25. Others in attendance on the GODJ side were Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf and Minister of Religious Affairs Hamoud Abdi Souldan. The TFG side also included Puntland President Ade Muse Hersi and TFG Presidency Secretary General Hussein. According to both sides, there was no separate one-on-one meeting between Guelleh and Yusuf. The Somali Charge said that protocol arrangements for the visit were only minimally gracious, with Yusuf met at the airport by the Presidency Protocol chief, but not by a cabinet minister, as has been customary on previous visits.

YUSUF RESISTS APPEAL TO BACK DJIBOUTI PROCESS

¶3. (C) Guelleh stressed to Yusuf that Djibouti harbors him no ill-will, that the country is serving as a venue for the peace talks but that these talks are led by the United Nations Special Representative. Djibouti's interest is in peace in Somalia. Even while hosting many opposition groups in Djibouti, the GODJ has ensured that they do not engage in any destabilizing activity within Somalia. Guelleh urged Yusuf to support the Nov. 25 communique and give it a chance to work.

¶4. (C) Echoing many arguments made to us Nov. 4 (reftel), Yusuf said the proposed enlargement of Parliament to form a unity government was unworkable. Expansion to 550 parliamentarians was unwieldy. Guelleh responded that this would only be for the remaining two years of the transition

period, and that the UN had already agreed to cover the costs. Yusuf asserted that the agreement was signed only among Hawiye and did not represent other Somalis. Guelleh said he was disappointed that Yusuf characterized the talks in this way, noting that the TFG delegation had been appointed by Yusuf. Yusuf said the decision on implementation of a government of national unity is now in the hands of Parliament.

GODJ SEES YUSUF AS "MANIPULATOR" AND "OBSTACLE TO PEACE"

¶ 15. (C) Commenting on the results of the Guelleh-Yusuf meeting, GODJ Presidency SecGen Ismail Tani said Yusuf is now trying to manipulate the parliamentary vote. The GODJ has received reports that Yusuf is paying \$3000 to sway parliamentarians against the Nov. 25 communique. Tani warned that Yusuf's anti-Hawiye argument may gain further traction if he succeeds in his effort to enlist the support of Parliamentary Speaker Madobe, a Rahanweyn. Tani said the Government of Ethiopia has great influence with Madobe, and could quickly dissuade Madobe from joining with Yusuf. Meanwhile, ARS Chairman Sheikh Sharif Ahmed has proposed traveling personally to Somalia to rally further support for the Djibouti Communique; he has asked for GODJ financial assistance, which is under consideration, Tani said.

¶ 16. (C) Our Senior GODJ contacts use increasingly harsh language to describe Yusuf's role in Somalia. Echoing the hard-line IGAD position, Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf told us Dec. 9 that Yusuf is "not a man of peace" but instead a "manipulator" focused only on advancing his clan's

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interest. Minister of Religious Affairs Hamoud named Yusuf along with Asmara Group leader Hassan Dahir Aweys as the two greatest "obstacles to peace" in Somalia. Hamoud said that any successful strategy in Somalia must: (1) support the peacemakers, (2) reconstitute effective Somali security forces, and (3) deploy an international interposition force while the political process advances.

COMMENT

¶ 17. (C) While the GODJ continues to talk to a broad array of Somali political actors, Djiboutian frustration is growing with Yusuf and his efforts to undermine the Djibouti process. Even those officials with long personal ties to Yusuf -- e.g., Ismail Tani, who told us he and Yusuf went on the Hajj together in 1995 -- now characterize him as an impediment to reconciliation in Somalia. Yusuf's rejection of Guelleh's appeals to support the Nov. 25 Djibouti Communique will reinforce this negative perception on the Djiboutian side.

SWAN